

# Probiotics, Nutrition and Microbes

July 18-19, 2018 Prague, Czech Republic

## Role of herbal prebiotics and probiotics in intestinal health

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Intestinal health depends on proper digestion, assimilation and evacuation of ingested food. Carakasamhita a treatise on Ayurvedic medicine introduced the concept of probiotics in the management of inflammatory bowel diseases grouped under Grahani Disease. Ancient seers of Ayurveda attributed various functions to Jatharagni and its moieties (digestive and metabolic regulators) and clearly defined that Jatharagni imparts immunity, good health and longevity. Disturbances of agni engenders several diseases in general and gastrointestinal diseases in particular. Caraka emphasizes the role of buttermilk a probiotic in the treatment of inflammatory bowel diseases. Probiotics are live beneficial bacteria that naturally created by the process of fermentation in foods like Yogurt, Buttermilk, Miso soup, Kimchi etc. Prebiotic fiber is a non-digestive part of food like banana, onions, garlic, chicory root, skin of apples, beans etc. Prebiotic fiber goes through the small intestine undigested and is fermented when it reaches the large colon. This fermentation process feeds beneficial bacterial colonies (including probiotic bacteria) and helps to increase the number of desirable bacteria in our digestive system (also called the gut) that are associated with better health and reduced disease risk. Takrarishta (a probiotic formulation with buttermilk & herbs) is one of the important formulations being prescribed in current clinical practice. The drugs namely Yavani (*Trachyspermum ammi*), Amalaki (*Emblica officinalis*), Haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*) and Maricha (*Piper nigrum*) act like prebiotics and augment probiotic activity. Another time tested formulation namely Chitrakadi gutika (a pill form) consisting of certain herbal roots, alkalis and salts is found to regulate gastrointestinal function. A critical analysis of information delineates classical Ayurvedic texts and documented evidence in experimental and clinical trials indicate that six fruits i.e., Amalaki, Haritaki, Pippali (*Piper longum*), Maricha, Yavani, Dadima (*Punica granatum*) and six roots i.e., Satavari (*Asparagus racemosus*), Yashti (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), Musta (*Cyperus rotundus*), Pippalimoola, Sunthi (*Zingiber officinale*), Chitraka (*Plumbago zeylanica*) play a significant role in restoring intestinal health by stimulating probiotic and prebiotic activities

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